

DISTINGVISHED
AMERICAN ARTISTS

JOHN
SINGER
SARGENT

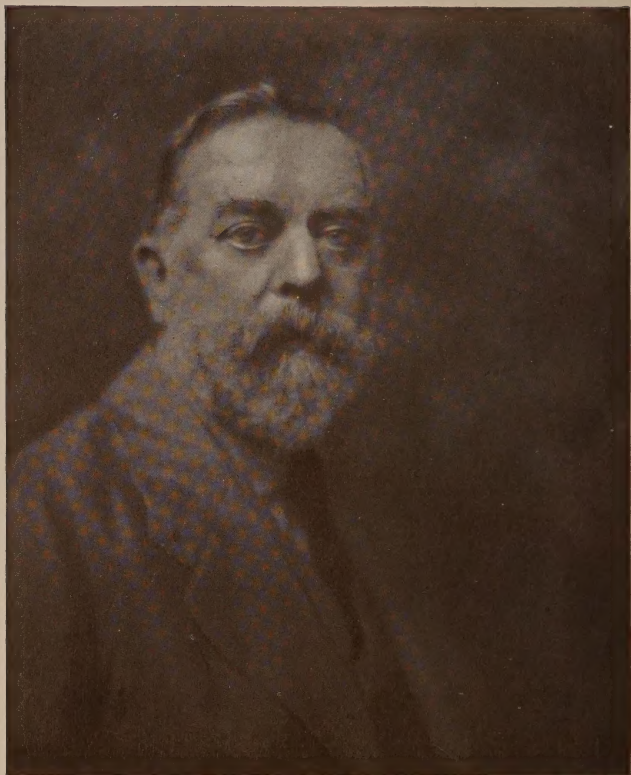


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Compiled by
NATHANIEL
POUSETTE-DART

With an introduction by
Lee Woodward Zeigler



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JOHN SINGER SARGENT

OF John Singer Sargent it has been said that though born abroad, (in Florence, in 1856, the son of a practicing physician,) he displays all the characteristics of an American in his art. It might be as truthfully said, perhaps, that of all painters he is the most characteristically American. Whether he owes to his Yankee forbears his keen objective vision, the variety and elasticity of his invention, and the expertness of his hand, natural gifts upon which he has built a technique of acknowledged mastery, is a question into which we need not enter.

Certain it is that whatever he may have got from his teachers, his early study under Carolos Duran, and later the influence of Hals and Velasquez, that technique, as sound as it is facile, is all his own, and to those who have watched his progress through his long series of triumphs in the realm of portraiture, is the result of his own industry, and the development of his own strong individuality.

In this day when tricks and fads prevail to such an extent as to have acquired respectability, he seems to rely upon a skill of hand that has developed as unconsciously as one's handwriting. Brilliant as the handling is, it appears entirely unselfconscious, the servant of a desire, in his own phrase, to paint what he sees. And in the result we are made aware of the beauty of what he sees, while composition, arrangement of masses and emphasis upon line and form are apparently as unstudied as the brush work.

Apparently; for it cannot be doubted that he has taken much thought of these things. For Sargent is a supreme stylist, though the style is as that of a speaker to whom through long habit in the selection of words that convey just the right shade of meaning, as well as of images that nicely express his thought, it has become impossible to say anything other than beautifully and well.

Nor is it a superficial kind of beauty. He is one who has gazed not unsympathetically upon the pageant of life, and as we study the long series of "counterfeit presentments" of humanity, it is impossible not to realize that he has in most cases reacted very sensitively to his sitter's personality, enchanting us now with the witchery of his rendering of some young girl's fragile loveliness, as in the charming "The Three Misses Hunter" and "The Ladies Alexander," now sobering our mood with his sympathetic portrayal of some sedate and dignified matron, or the virile presentation of some fine type of vigorous manhood, as in his "Major Higginson," (one of his most profound characterizations,) the soldierly head of General Wood, or his portrait of John Hay.

It is said that Vandyke had models with beautiful hands who sat for the hands of his portraits, and it is a well-known custom of some portrait painters in active practice to have models sit for the clothes. It is impossible to think of Sargent using either of these devices. His hands are as authentic as his faces. Study Homer Saint Gaudens' hands, for instance, or those of "Mrs. Iselin," where the nicety of his observation is shown in the pressure of the fingers on the table's edge, or the clasped hands of "Mrs. Edward Davis and Her Son." And his clothes! No one but the original owner could wear them with such ease and naturalness, with the degree of conscious unconscious-

ness proper to good breeding. In fact, it might be said that Sargent is rather fond of clothes, so successful has he been where many fail, or at least accepts them without reserve, as part of his sitters' individuality, and necessary to its interpretation, even rendering an ugly fashion faithfully, and with a kind of grace.

While one feels this interest in his fellow beings as an essential part of his art, he is not a psychologist in the sense of bending the outward semblance to some preconception of the sitter, or with some uncanny power of searching the hidden recesses of his soul, but simply by the ability to see what the untrained eye passes over, the unavoidable traces of that soul's development in brow and nose, in cheek and chin and mouth and eye, seen in terms of anatomical structure as light reveals it and expressed by a high light here, a line or depression there.

This is true also of his landscapes and glimpses of old-world architecture, streets and court-yards. Nowhere is the effort to render a mood of nature, but always sense of light and space and sound construction. Done in holiday vein, as it seems they for the most part are, nevertheless they are true portraits of place and incident, painted with the same objective vision, which, if it does not see below the surface, sees and preserves all that is recorded there.

Here it is that the essential joyousness of the art, founded as it is on health and sanity, reveals itself. The splash of a fountain, the glow of the southern sun on some rococo cathedral front, the checkered play of light in some meadow nook, all bespeak the robust, joyous temperament, and even occasionally humor, as, for instance, in "His Studio."

But this is not all. The estimate of our painter as a

mere recorder of the obvious, however masterful, the clever portrayor of his kind, however sympathetic, needed revision, when, on the completion of the Boston Public Library, his Prophets were put in place. At one large stride the portrait painter took front rank in the peculiar and exacting field of mural decoration. Lacking nothing of his wonted strength of characterization, even to the point of dramatic power, the great canvas is painted with a suavity that he has never excelled in any portrait, and covered with an ease that could not be greater if its dimensions had been in inches instead of feet.

And in spite of the compelling interest in the figures, it is first of all, and in the best sense, decorative.

Since then one great mural painting has followed another. From what secret spring the inspiration for these great works has come, or why it lay dormant all the years, which it seems almost must be regarded as years of apprenticeship, or how, with that spring bubbling beneath, he could yet hold his attention fixed upon the problem in hand, how have patience to give his time to making "likenesses" of his fellow mortals, (indeed, it seems as though that patience has at length given out, for it is understood that he has announced that he will make no more,) is the master's secret. We cannot know. It is idle to speculate, just as it is idle to speculate whether, if instead of his fortunate early surroundings and advantages and his happy contacts (which might have spoiled a lesser man), he had had to endure the poverty and limitations of, say, a Millet, his art would have had a deeper, profounder meaning, a greater scope, or, as has been the case with so many, have perished in the bud. We must take our Sargent as we find him, as something to be grateful for.

LEE WOODWARD ZEIGLER.

*The sixty-four paintings herein reproduced illustrate
the varied characteristics of this artist's work.*



THE MISSES HUNTER
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



A VENETIAN INTERIOR
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



PORTRAIT OF MISS ADA REHAN
Owned by Mrs. G. M. Whitin



PORTRAIT OF MRS. KATE A. MOORE
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



COUNTESS OF WARWICK AND SON
Owned by the Worcester Art Museum



THE LADIES ALEXANDRA, MARY AND THEO ACHESON
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



THE SKETCHERS
Owned by H. P. Carolan
Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.



THE FOUNTAIN

*Owned by the Art Institute of Chicago
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.*



THE CHESS PLAYERS
Courtesy Grand Central Art Galleries



TWO GIRLS FISHING
Owned by the Cincinnati Museum

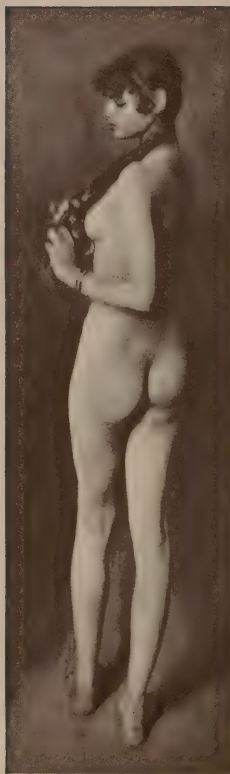


CARNATION, LILY, LILY, ROSE
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



PORTRAIT OF A GIRL IN WHITE MUSLIN

Miss Austruther Thomson
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



EGYPTIAN GIRL
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



CAPRI GIRL
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



EL JALEO
Mrs. J. Gardner
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



VENETIAN INTERIOR
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



THE COURT YARD
Owned by Mrs. E. H. Harriman
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



THE WEAVERS

Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.

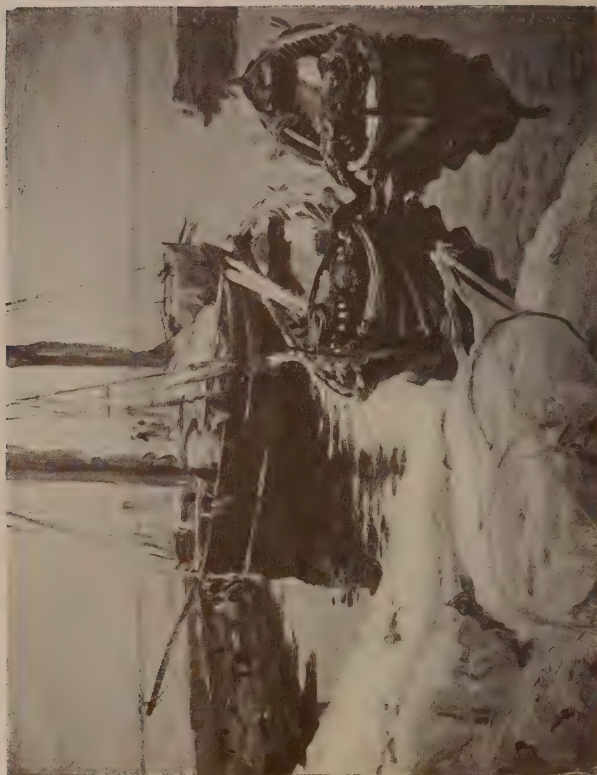


A TROUT STREAM IN THE TYROL
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



THE HERMIT

Owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art



THREE BOATS IN HARBOUR; SAN VIGILIO, LAC DE GARDA
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



RECONNOITERING
Owned by John Singer Sargent



A MOUNTAIN SHEEPFOLD IN THE TYROL
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



LANDSCAPE WITH GOATS

Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



TYROLESE INTERIOR
Owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art



CHILDREN OF E. D. BOIT
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



BREAKFAST IN THE LOGGIA

Owned by Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art,

Washington, D. C.

Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



THE CONFESSION

*Owned by Dr. Desmond FitzGerald
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.*



FUMIE D'AMBRE GRIS
Courtesy M. Knoedler & Co.



LUXEMBURG GARDENS AT TWILIGHT
Owned by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts



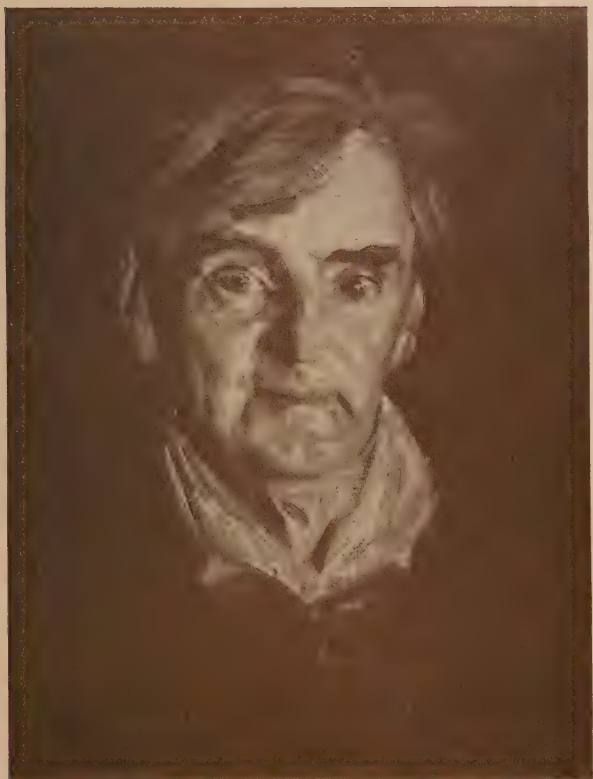
THE ARTIST, PAUL HELLEU, SKETCHING WITH HIS WIFE
Owned by the Brooklyn Museum
Owned by Mrs. Hadden



HIS STUDIO
Owned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



LANDSCAPE AT SIMPTON
*Owned by Mr. James Parmelee
Courtesy M. Knodler & Co.*



HEAD OF JOSEPH JEFFERSON
Owned by John Singer Sargent



CARMENCITA
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



MISS ELLEN TERRY AS LADY MACBETH
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



ITALIAN WITH ROPE
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



BEDOUIN ARAB

Courtesy William Heinemann, London



GITANA

Owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art



JOHANNES WOLFF
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



EGYPTIAN WOMAN
(Coin Necklace)
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



GEORGE HENSCHEL
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



GENERAL SIR IAN HAMILTON
(Full Length)
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



THE SULPHUR MATCH
Owned by Mr. Louis Curtis



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PORTRAIT OF MR. AND MRS. FIELD
Owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



PADRE SEBASTIANO
Owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art



HENRY G. MARQUAND
Owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art



COVENTRY PATMORE
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



PORTRAIT OF MME. ERRAZURIZ
Courtesy Kirkman & Hall, New York



SKETCH OF MRS. AUGUSTUS HEMENWAY
Owned by Mrs. Hemenway



LADY HAMILTON
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PORTRAIT OF EDWARD ROBINSON, ESQ.
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MRS. MARQUAND
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ASHER WERTHEIMER
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Owned by Harvard University



W. GRAHAM ROBERTSON
Courtesy William Heinemann, London



DUCHESS OF PORTLAND
Courtesy William Heinemann, London

SARGENT, JOHN SINGER, born, Florence, Italy, of American parents, January 12, 1856. Pupil of Academy of Fine Arts, Florence; Carolus Duran in Paris.

MEMBER OF

ASSOCIATE, NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, New York, 1891.
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, New York (Academicians),
1897.

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF MURAL PAINTERS, New York.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PORTRAIT PAINTERS, New York.

COPLEY SOCIETY OF BOSTON—*Honorary Member*.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS—*Honorary Member*.

PARIS SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARTISTS.

SOCIETY NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS, Paris.

ROYAL ACADEMY, London.

CENTURY ASSOCIATION, New York.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS.

PHILADELPHIA WATER COLOR CLUB—*Honorary Member*.

BERLIN ACADEMY.

INSTITUTE DE FRANCE, 1905.

AWARDS

Honorable mention, Paris, Salon, 1878.

Second Class Medal, Paris Salon, 1881.

Medal of Honor, Paris Exposition, 1889.

Medal, Philadelphia Art Club, 1890.

Medal, Columbia Exposition, Chicago, 1893.

Temple Gold Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts,
1894.

Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, France, 1889; Officer, 1897.

Medal of Honor, Paris Exposition, 1900.

Gold Medal, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901.

Converse Gold Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,
1903.

Large Gold Medal, Berlin, 1903.

Grand Prize, St. Louis Exposition, 1904.

Gold Medal of Honor, Liège Exposition, 1905.

Gold Medal, Venice, 1907.

Beck Gold Medal, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1909.

Order of Merit, Germany, 1909.

Gold Medal of Honor, National Institute of Arts and Letters,
1914.

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MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART, MINNEAPOLIS.
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TATE GALLERY, LONDON.
UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE.
WORCESTER (MASS.) ART MUSEUM.

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